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PITTA

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PROGRAMME

FIELD OUTINGS

10th: ICRISAT Campus, Patancheru. Time - 8 a.m. at ICRISAT main gate. This is a full day outing and members should carry light snacks and drinking water. Lunch will also be available at ICRISAT on payment of nominal charges.

24th : Nehru Zoological Park. Time - 8 a.m. at ticket counter. This will be a half day trip.

Note:- Members are requested to reach the destinations on their own. However, the A.P. Forest Dept., will provide transport for 10 persons, departing from Kamat Hotel, Koti at 7 a.m. sharp. Members may book seats in advance at the following phones. For detailed directions contact Mr. Rajiv Mathew (310721), Mr. M.S. Kulkarni (233336) or Mr. Aasheesh Pittie (315683).

EDITORIAL

Wetlands have been treated with such hostility and carelessness by humans over so many years that their conservation today seems almost counter-productive. Yet, wetlands are far from useless or areas of desolation. They are rich in fish, birds, crocodiles and other fauna and also support plants with high medicinal value. They are the natural habitat of one of the world's most used food grain - rice. Many strains of rice are today cultivated in modified forms of wetlands and even tilled by a wetland animal - the water buffalo. The estuarine and coastal wetlands, mangrove forests, salt marshes and mudflats have enormous biological productivity and are important as nursery grounds for fishes and other marine fauna and flora. They are also defenses for the low lying areas against sea storms and cyclones.

Wetlands regulate the flow of water. Rivers will remain a reliable source of water during summer when there are marshes along its path which will impede the flow and slow down the drainage of the water. When streams are straightened or allowed to silt and the upstream areas are denuded of forests and marshes, floods and storms will cause chaos and havoc. Besides, the fast flow of water leaves very little to rely on in summer months. Several times towns and cities on the banks and flood plains of rivers have had to bear the tragedy and cost of the floods.

It is time the enormous value of fresh and brackish water wetlands, mangroves and other water bodies is recognized as a life giving source. Lakes, rivers, estuaries and other wetlands need to be defended against those who want to destroy them. Wetlands have already been drained, shrunken and destroyed more severely than many other wild habitats and because of this humanity has lost tremendously. We need to plan and manage our remaining wetlands far more wisely than in the earlier years. This should be brought about by an informed and caring society which takes up this work with missionary zeal and a sense of purpose. (Siraj Taher).

NOTES & NEWS

The Society will conduct a workshop in basic ornithology and birdwatching on 20 and 21 January 1996 for approximately 30 interested people from the districts of AP. Though a preliminary selection of the candidates has been made on the basis of a questionnaire sent out

earlier by the Society, some vacancies may exist. Members who are interested in joining the course may contact the Hon. Secretary or the Editor for details. The course program is being finalized and more details of the workshop will be further communicated to members during field trips. Volunteers are needed for various jobs. Please contact Hon. Secretary for details.

Though the BSAP has not yet received information regarding the annual waterfowl count, the Newsletter for Birdwatchers, Bangalore, has announced the following dates: 7 - 21 January 1995. Information is awaited from AWB and developments will be notified through PITTA or during field trips. Members are however requested to keep themselves free for this exercise during the above period. Participation is the key to make such endeavors a success.

Mr. C R Sarath, a life member of the Society, has sent a copy of "Annotated Checklist of The Birds of Bangalore", edited by Joseph George and published by Birdwatchers' Field Club of Bangalore, as a gift for BSAP. May his tribe increase and we benefit from such generosity so that a lending library could be started for the members!

Dr. Kumar Ghorpade writes from Bangalore, "Volunteer naturalists can join the *WILDERNESS INDIA Research Expeditions* teams doing biodiversity surveys in peninsular India. They will share costs and be trained to assist research scientists to complete ongoing projects, mainly on bird and insect faunas, with an eye on the floras, of selected ecosystems. Interested participants (or sponsors) are requested to write to Dr. Kumar Ghorpade, P.O. Box 8439, Bangalore 560084 (or Fax 080-5463378) for more details of participation or sponsorship, and for application forms."

It is proposed to bring out a special issue of MAYURA during the workshop mentioned above, dealing with the wetlands and waterfowl of the state. Members who wish to contribute may please send their material to the editor at the earliest.

SANCTUARY ASIA magazine has published a special issue on the birds of India (Vol. XV. No. 5. 1995. Rs. 20/-) which is a well illustrated, highly readable and informative update on the status of birdlife of the country. Response of written matter for such an issue has been so tremendous that they will bring out another special issue on the same subject next time too!

Palmakole Tank, which the members birded on 12/11, brimful with water, which is the case with most waterbodies this year. We began birding late, but were enthralled by the activity of a number of species. Good concentrations of waterfowl, ducks and cormorants, were busy on the waters, though keeping mainly on the farther side, silhouetted against the sun. However, wigeon, pintail, spotbill duck, garganey and shoveller were identified. Closer at hand, a male Montagu's harrier riveted our eye to his buoyant sailing over the rocky and sparsely shrubbed country. Rufoustailed finch-lark chased each other in their undulated flight, calling constantly. A tawny pipit quizzed out ID skills with some light rufous on its flanks.

The trip to Narsapur Reserve Forest (26/11), though well attended, was disappointing and taught us a lesson in timing. We started late and so missed all the early morning activity which makes birding so exciting. The stream has some water and the deep shady pools formed as it gradually meanders through the forest, still attract birders and birds. Such areas require a quiet-wait-and-watch birding strategy which we ignored in our anxiety to see many species. There were good views of the redbreasted flycatcher and some lilting music of the Tickell's blue flycatcher from amongst thick under-cover. Many thanks are due to Mr. Joseph and Mr. Varaprasad of the AP Forest Dept., for logistics and lunch!

Mr. M S Kulkarni reports sighting a couple of forest wagtails just outside Adilabad town on the morning of 26th September 1995. They fed on the *kuchcha* path beside the road, undisturbed by two villagers rushing for the standing bus!

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